

Project VALUE: Enabling Independence for the Elderly

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A recent survey of 2,000 people by the AARP found that older Americans would like to remain in their current residence for as long as possible.* Even if they need help caring for themselves, older Americans want services that allow them to stay in their current home.

Created by staff at the University of Minnesota, the **Virtual Assisted Living Umbrella for the Elderly (VALUE)** program will combine home monitoring devices, videoconferencing, and Internet access to help frail elderly persons live independently in their homes. The project will recruit seniors from urban Minneapolis and Wadena County in rural central Minnesota, areas with limited assisted living housing facilities for frail elderly clients. The Minneapolis area has high levels of poverty and large populations of persons over age 60. Wadena County, one of the poorest rural counties in Minnesota, also has a predominantly aging population.

Project participants will receive a network-connected workstation with a monitor, keyboard, video camera, and health monitoring attachments. Using DSL lines, seniors will conduct virtual medical visits to physicians, measure and record their health status, schedule and confirm community services like “Meals-on-Wheels” or special care van. Email and videoconferencing will allow easy, fast communication with service providers as well as family and friends. Participants will be able to retain the benefits of remaining at home, in familiar neighborhood surroundings, while having access to needed resources.



Project VALUE involves partners from the private and public sectors. Industry partners include NONIN Medical, Inc., and QRS Diagnostic, LLC. The Volunteers of America-Minnesota and Tri-County Hospital will provide community service coordination and health care delivery. The University of Minnesota will lead the project evaluation and study participants' health and functional status, self-care behaviors, satisfaction with their living conditions, and their ability to live independently. As our nation's population ages, project VALUE will show how technology can offer viable and cost-effective means for seniors to “age in place.”

*http://research.aarp.org/il/four_walls.html